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The cover photo this issue shows The Governor-General, Her Excellency The Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn A.C, speaking at the State Funeral for Professor Richard Scolyer A.O. Professor Scolyer A.O, who passed away on 7 June after a very public battle with brain cancer, wrote a final message to all Australians. He wrote, "Thank you. I haven't sugar-coated my journey, and I sincerely thank you for allowing me the space and opportunity to share it with you, warts and all. I would be delighted and humbled to be remembered as a proud everyday Aussie who 'gave it a crack' and, in doing so, inspired others to pursue their dreams and passions with humility, love and compassion."

NOTICES & EXCLUSIONS:

This version of our national magazine is not intended for general distribution to the wider public but is prepared as a service for those of our members who require the use of vision-impaired screen-reader technology. Thus, certain pages of the hard-copy version involving complex graphics or page layout have been omitted.

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MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE SAM MOSTYN A.C GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

In late July, I travelled to Glasgow for the Commonwealth Games as Patron-in-Chief of Commonwealth Games Australia. In a team of more than 250 exceptional Australian athletes, including representatives from every Australian state and territory, and a record 68 paralympic competitors, the spirit and promise of modern Australia was on glorious display. It was uplifting to witness our team carry the hope of Australia with so much energy, optimism and, ultimately, success.

Before arriving in Glasgow, I spent time in London, where it was a privilege to call on His Majesty King Charles at Clarence House. I was able to convey to His Majesty the warm greetings of all Australians. My time in London was also an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of Australians living and working in the United Kingdom. At Stoke Lodge, the residence of our High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, I was delighted to launch Australia House Creatives, a network of support for UK-based Australian artists and creatives. These musicians, visual artists, performers, comedians, writers, actors, designers, founders and supporters are building strong creative links with a global community and paving the way for Australia's exceptional creativity to find an international audience.

The most recent King's Birthday Honours list was, once again, an opportunity to celebrate Australian contributions on an international stage, alongside Australians who are giving the gift of their energy and dedication to their communities and in their professions at home. Just like those honoured across the past 50 years, the service and achievement of all the recipients – in the community and public service, industry and academia, science, the arts and sport – help shape our nation.

In recent months, I have been grateful for the Council for the Order of Australia's support to preside over investitures expedited for Australians who, due to significant health issues, were unable to participate in the Spring or Autumn ceremonies. This included a moving moment to invest James Valentine as a Member of the Order of Australia only days before he died on 22 April. The prominent display of the insignia of the Officer of the Order of Australia at the State Funeral of Professor Richard Scolyer A.O was a confirmation of how deeply Australians respect and cherish our national honours system.

As Governor-General, I have the unique privilege to see and understand Australia on a panoramic scale, and in the fine grain life of communities across the nation. Our national honours and awards

system should always reflect the breadth of our national life and community, regardless of gender, social, cultural or economic background. And every list, as a celebration of difference, diversity, connection and community, should uplift and empower with its example of unity that is not defined by uniformity.

Preparing for the Spring season of investiture ceremonies at Government House is a time to reflect on the generosity at the heart of nominating a fellow Australian who performs selfless acts with deep care for people, for our institutions, our environment, and for our future. By honouring the work and leadership of selfless Australians through nomination, we share the stories of integrity, respect, service, kindness and care that are told every day across the country. It is a reminder of the potential for every Australian to make a difference, and of our collective opportunity to recognise and celebrate those who go above and beyond on behalf of us all.

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Hon Hieu Van Le A.C



It is a great honour to write to you for the first time as National President of the Order of Australia Association.

I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, the Hon Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, whose dedicated leadership and commitment have strengthened our Association and provided a strong foundation for the future. I am grateful for her service and honoured to continue her important work.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to the former National Chair, MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O R.F.D E.D (RETD), for his outstanding leadership and service, including nine years as National Chair.

Over recent months, I have focused on listening, learning and building relationships with those who share responsibility for the strength and integrity of the Order of Australia. I have had the pleasure of meeting with the Governor-General and her Official Secretary to discuss our shared aspirations for

the Association and the future of the Order. These conversations reinforced the importance of recognising the extraordinary contributions of Australians from every community, profession and walk of life.

I have also enjoyed constructive discussions with the National Chair, Mr William Lye O.A.M K.C. Together, we have explored opportunities to enhance the profile of both the Order and the Association, while considering how Australia's honours system can remain inclusive, accessible and responsive to our diverse and evolving nation.

I was also pleased to attend meetings of the Association's Executive Committee and was inspired by the dedication, wisdom, generosity and commitment of its members.

Our Association has a unique and important role in supporting the ideals of the Order of Australia. By working closely with the Council, the Governor-General's Office, dedicated community organisations and other partners, we can continue to build a vibrant, inclusive and respected organisation that honours service above self and inspires future generations.

I am excited about the journey ahead and optimistic about what we can achieve together. I look forward to meeting many more members in the coming months, and particularly at our 2027 National Conference in Adelaide, where I am delighted to be one of the speakers.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our Association and the values that unite us. Together, we will strengthen the Order of Australia Association as a proud and enduring champion of service, excellence and community across our nation.

MESSAGE FROM THE OAA NATIONAL CHAIR
WILLIAM LYE O.A.M K.C



For years, whenever the Victorian Branch held an event, somebody had to bring the merchandise. The ties and the brooches, the lapel pins, the box that needed counting before the doors opened and counting again after everyone had gone home. For many years, that job belonged to Richard Rozen O.A.M and his wife Rysia, and they did it quietly and well. Richard passed away last month.

His was a remarkable life. A hidden child who survived the Holocaust in Poland, he reached Melbourne in 1951, became a chess and bridge champion, founded the St Kilda Chess Club, and received the Medal of the Order in 1997 for service to chess, bridge and the community. Nowhere in that citation is there a line about carrying a box of merchandise to a Branch event. Yet that was service too, and the Branch would have been poorer without it.

On behalf of the leadership teams, I would like to send the Rozen family our deepest condolences and acknowledge and thank them for their years of long service to the Association.

What keeps our Association going

I have been thinking about the kind of contribution we are making. Our Deputy National Chair, David North O.A.M, offered me an analogy. He observed that a good many of our members belong to veteran and historic car clubs, and that those clubs celebrate far more than the vehicles themselves. They celebrate the craftsmanship, the fellowship and the patience required to preserve something worth keeping for the people who come after us.

David's example was the Model T Ford, in which no single part could succeed on its own. The engine gave power; the steering gave direction; the fuel gave energy and the brakes gave safe passage. Remove any one of them and the rest counted for nothing. Our Association runs in much the same way. Our members are the engine. Our leadership is the steering. Our committees are the working parts that keep everything turning over.

An analogy of that sort can excite car enthusiasts, though, because it draws the eye to the grand machinery. What actually keeps a historic vehicle on the road is a good deal less glamorous. It is the owner who checks the oil on a Sunday morning before anyone else is awake, and the club member who keeps the spare parts catalogued so that a stranger three states away can find the one piece s/he needs.

The work that never makes the citation

Our Association is no different. An email answered on the day it arrives. A telephone call to a member who has not been seen at anything for a while, made without any agenda beyond wanting to know how s/he is. A raffle reconciled to the cent. Chairs stacked after a Branch lunch, once the caterers have packed up and only four people are left in the room. None of that makes headlines. All of it matters.

It is worth remembering that this is the same instinct that brought most of us into the Order in the first place. A citation records what was visible. Behind almost every one of them sits a great deal that was not.

An invitation and a caution

In a good many of our Branches and Regional Groups, the hands that do this work are the same hands, year after year -- and hands grow tired. If you are one of those people, you have my thanks, and I would ask you to say so plainly when the load has become too heavy. Nobody can help with a burden they cannot see. And if you are not one of those people, please take this as your invitation. Ask your Branch chair what needs doing that nobody has volunteered for. You will not find it advertised, because the people who currently carry it are far too polite to ask twice.

A historic vehicle holds its value because its owners keep caring for it and keep sharing their enthusiasm with others. We are the same. When the merchandise box is opened at the next Branch function and everything inside is in good order, somebody put it there. That is how an Association stays on the road, and it is why I remain grateful to every one of you who keeps a hand on it.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

CHAIR'S REPORT

Noel Hender O.A.M B.E.M

As we move into the final quarter of 2026, I am impressed with what has already been achieved by our Branch this year and am looking forward with anticipation to the challenges ahead. In particular, we have just been successful in gaining a significant grant from the History Trust of South Australia to enable our collection of historical documents accrued over the years and which include photographs, minutes, citations, records, and some living history interviews, to be audited, and assessed for historical significance by a professional historian and cultural heritage consultant. We intend to have our historical significance fully documented, recognised and acknowledged in time for the 50-year anniversary of the Association in 2030.

Our regional and central gatherings have been well attended, with the second round of regional meetings due to commence in late August. These meetings highlight the diversity of service and community spirit represented within our membership —from long-standing volunteers who have shaped their communities over decades, to newer recipients who are bringing fresh perspectives to our activities and civic leadership.

As Chair, I have been particularly impressed by the continuing engagement of members with our youth through our Student Citizenship Awards. Many actively support the programme by attending schools to present the certificates and medallions to the students who have been recognised for their school and community participation. These efforts speak directly to the spirit of the Order: honouring achievement and nurturing the next generation.

Looking ahead, preparations for the 2027 National Conference in Adelaide are well underway. This will be an opportunity not only to showcase our state's hospitality but also to reflect on the evolving role of the Association in a changing Australia. More of what is planned will be available soon. I encourage all members to stay connected and to participate where you can, and continue sharing your ideas with the Branch committee.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to service.

EVENTS

NEW RECIPIENTS' RECEPTION

In our first New Recipients' Reception for the year held on Thursday 21 May, the S.A Branch acknowledged 17 new recipients announced in the 2026 Australia Day Honours List and one other not previously acknowledged in this way.

The guest speaker was Vincent Ciccarello O.A.M, Director of Development and Philanthropy at Pembroke School, on the topic 'What does a career in the Arts look like?' Vincent was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, *for service to arts administration* (A.D.25).

Vincent is an Adelaide-based arts leader and philanthropy director, with more than three decades of experience across classical music, journalism and philanthropy. With a Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Musicology from the University of Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium of Music, his early career took him into arts administration, including a role as Orchestra Resources Manager at the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. He then moved into artist management, before founding and running Fanfare Artist Management from 1994 to 2004, representing classical and musical theatre artists across Australia and New Zealand. He went on to serve as Managing Director of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra for nine years (2014-22). Following that role, he was appointed Head of Philanthropy and Enterprise at the Art Gallery of South Australia, where he led the gallery's philanthropic, development, and membership programmes.

We thank the City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters. and Mayor Robert Bria for their outstanding ongoing support for our New Recipients' Receptions, and Vili's Family Bakery for again subsidising the cost of the refreshments.

Memories of Landunna

Among the guests at our June Fellowship Luncheon at the Naval, Military and Air Force Club in Adelaide were S.A Branch members Hedley Bachmann A.M and Anne Bachmann O.A.M J.P. Visiting the Naval, Military and Air Force Club premises always has a special significance for Anne.

The property at 111 Hutt Street has variously been known as 'Landunna' and 'Ulysses' during its 150-year history, being acquired by the N.M.A.F Club in 1956.

Town Acre 361, at the corner of Hutt and Wakefield Streets, was purchased in July 1872 by John Rounsevell (1836-1902) – a pastoralist, contractor, Member of Adelaide City Council and Member of Parliament.

He commissioned the building of a 20-room house, using material from the Glen Osmond and Mitcham quarries, which was completed in early 1873. Rounsevell named the property 'Landunna', after the family's hometown in Cornwall.

Inside the front doors of the Club today is a large framed photograph of 'Landunna' – where John Rounsevell lived until his death on 15 May 1902.



Rounsevell can be seen on the veranda with his third wife Elizabeth Jane Coombs (1856-1886), and her younger sister Sarah. John Rounsevell's first wife Emma Hart died in 1876, soon after the completion of 'Landunna', and his second wife Elisa Hart (Emma's sister) died in 1881. Rounsevell married Elizabeth Jane Coombs (1856-1886) on 3 December 1881, but she died just five years later of typhoid fever. Rounsevell then married Elizabeth's younger sister Sarah Coombs.

For Anne, returning to 'Landunna' gives her a chance to reflect on this historic image of John Rounsevell with Elizabeth and Sarah Coombs – sisters of Robert John Coombs J.P and aunts of Anne's grandmother Hilda Coombs.

Anne Bachmann O.A.M J.P was the guest speaker at our 2023 Christmas Morning Tea, on the topic 'Making our courts and prisons kinder'. Anne has served as a volunteer at the Adelaide Women's Prison since 1987. She has held roles on the Correctional Services Advisory Council and as Special Advisor to the Adelaide Women's Prison, and has been a Justice of the Peace, Justice of the Quorum, and President for two terms of the Royal Association of Justices of South Australia. She received the OAM in 2006: *for service to the community through support for the role and education of Justices of the Peace* (A.D.06).

FEATURED MEMBER

CATHY CHONG A.M, DEPUTY CHAIR OF THE SA BRANCH COMMITTEE

The S.A Branch is pleased to advise that Cathy Chong A.M has accepted the position of Deputy Chair of the S.A Branch. Cathy was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, *for significant service to multiculturalism in South Australia, and to the community* (A.D.22).

Cathy started her career as a Registered Nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (1969-72) and was later Director of Nursing at Flinders Medical Centre. She is an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Service Management.

Cathy served as an Executive Board Member of the Multicultural Communities Council of S.A from 2005 to 2017, and was the Founder and President of the Sukeenang South Australian Hainan Association, and Founding Ambassador for the OZAsia Festival (since 2007).

Cathy was a Member of the Volunteer Ministerial Advisory Group, S.A Minister for Small Business (2008-13). She was President of Chinese Welfare Services S.A from 2011 to 2015 and again since

2019.

She was President of Chinatown Adelaide Association (2010-12) and served as a member of the Women's Advisory Committee, South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (2010-15), and as Deputy Chair, Multicultural Festival of South Australia (2010-15). She has been a Board Member of the Adelaide Festival Centre Foundation since 2018.

Cathy has been a Justice of the Peace since 2011. She has given extensive volunteer service with the Rotary Club of Adelaide Central, including a term as President, and was a Paul Harris Fellow. In 2019 she received an Outstanding Individual Achievement Award in the Governor's Multicultural Awards.

Cathy joined the S.A Branch Committee in 2024 filling a casual vacancy, and was elected to the Branch Committee in February 2025; she also serves as the Branch Merchandise Officer.



Photo of Cathy Chong A.M J.P

QUEENSLAND

CHAIR'S REPORT

Ronda Nix O.A.M

Since my last report in *The Order*, the Investitures of the 2026 Australia Day Awardees by the Governor of Queensland have taken place at Government House Queensland, and a Welcome Dinner held for the new awardees, their families and friends. It was pleasing to note the diverse ethnic backgrounds of many of the new recipients. The work done in the past several years by the Multicultural and Diversity Officer on our Branch Committee, Irene Cayas O.A.M, to promote and encourage nominations in the Order of Australia from our ethnic communities appears to be finally bearing fruit. Irene has a long history of leadership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, having joined in 1998. She has previously served on its Board in roles including Deputy Chairperson and Convenor of the Women's Ethnic Network. We are fortunate to have her expertise.

Following the National Conference in Brisbane, we presented our sponsors with plaques of

appreciation, since without our sponsors we would have made a significant loss on the event. They were all surprised and extremely appreciative to receive the plaque, which was gratifying. The presentation of the plaque to our Platinum Sponsor, Honeycombes Property Group, even made it into the North Queensland newspaper, *The Townsville Bulletin*, along with a photograph and an article about The Order of Australia.

On Friday 5 June, along with several other members of the Queensland Branch, I attended a black-tie reception in the presence of The Governor of Queensland, The Honourable Dr Jeannette Young A.C P.S.M for the King's Birthday. It was hosted by the Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship, Queensland. Though the names of the 2026 King's Birthday recipients have been announced, it will be September before they are invested at Government House. The Governor is making an exception for recipients from Far North Queensland. They were invested in Cairns on 24 July and our Far North Regional Group Convenor, John Hardy O.A.M, deputised in my absence.

Our Branch has several functions planned throughout the state in coming weeks – in Ipswich, Townsville and Gympie. In other words, now the National Conference finally is behind us, normal service has been resumed.

FEATURED MEMBER

EDUCATION IS THE KEY: ADJUNCT PROFESSOR FLOYD LEEDIE A.M

A six-year old's longing for a matchbox toy car to play with in the sandpit was the impetus for a remarkable life. Floyd Leedie A.M vowed that he would change not only his situation but the lives of other Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people. His children were not going to be disadvantaged because of their perceived place in society. Floyd's life has been shaped by this personal experience of growing up in a family affected by the Stolen Generation and stolen wages. These experiences inspired him to dedicate his life to creating opportunities and improving outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Floyd decided to give himself a chance and to him the answer lay in education. Today Floyd strongly advocates for across-the-board education. He graduated from the University of Southern Queensland with a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting). A complete career redirection found him in the Indigenous health sector.

Since joining Goondir Health Services in 2001 and becoming C.E.O in 2008, Floyd has transformed the organisation into a leading provider of culturally safe and holistic healthcare across regional and rural Queensland. Under his leadership, Goondir has expanded its services, embraced innovative digital health technologies, and developed programmes that address not only physical health but also education, employment, family wellbeing and community connections

Floyd understands that the priority for improvement in Indigenous health over the next decade is Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. His conviction is that this will come with greater intergenerational change that will be shaped by resilience, leadership and belief in education.

A mentor, educator and visionary leader, Floyd Leedie AM continues to inspire young people to 'give themselves a chance' through education and determination. His life's work has created lasting

change and provided hope and opportunity for countless Indigenous Australians.
Floyd would like his legacy to be that he was a man who believed that Education is the key.



The photo is of Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeanette Young A.C P.S.M, Governor of Queensland, and Adjunct Professor Floyd Leedie A.M

W.A

Chair's Report

Judy Hogben A.M

The worst of winter is over and with the promise of spring comes new initiatives and events, including the ones that the W.A Branch is developing/implementing.

The Branch has been considering how best to communicate with members and, of course, to attract new members. One initiative we are working on is a short video of our committee, including individuals' background and role in the committee as well as a 'call to arms' to become involved. The reason for doing this is so that members can get to know the committee and also feel more included in Branch activities. It is a work in progress, and we are currently investigating options for a quality and convenient filming option. Hopefully we will have the clip up and ready for viewing in

September/October.

In the last edition of *The Order*, I mentioned that we had for the first time videoed and uploaded to the web the guest speaker's talk at our February A.G.M. Again, this has been well received and highlights the importance of multiple forms of communication and inclusion.

It can be accessed at: <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/wa/about-us/>. The assistance of our friends and partners, U.3.A, in videoing the talk, is greatly appreciated.

Over winter we have also been exploring the development of a schools-based citizenship programme. Information sent to us from other jurisdictions around similar programmes they run has been extremely useful and we hope to have our programme begin in 2027.

Celebrating new Awardees is always both important and exciting. On 5 August the Branch held its reception for the new Awardees announced in the Kings Birthday list with a reception in the City of Bayswater. The Branch had explored other options for the reception, but given the fantastic hospitality and venues offered through metropolitan Local Government, the format is definitely a winner! With such a large number of recipients it was a great celebration of service. We are grateful for the support of our local government partners.

With a state as large as W.A, and with the average age of membership, encouraging and supporting members across the state is a significant task. With the help of the Board of the Order of Australia Association, the W.A Branch is helping local sub-committees to provide transport to and from major events. This is proving popular as the direct feedback shows. The Branch is monitoring the impact of this initiative to judge whether it should be built into future budgets.

As always, I look forward to catching up with members and guests at the forthcoming events and thank the W.A Branch committee for its ongoing work and support.

EVENTS

Autumn in Waroona

A very successful visit to Professor Kingsley Dixon A.O and Lionel Johnston's remarkable Cyprus garden in Waroona, in the Peel region, took place on 18 May 2026. The visit started with an overview by Kingsley and then visitors were guided around their beautiful garden which has been re-established following a devastating fire three years ago. The rehabilitation of the land and the addition of several waterways and buildings provide many quiet and reflective places. The enormous replanting that they have undertaken is a credit to their hard work and dedication to the land. The trip at this time of the year was made even more successful by the autumn tones and magnificent colour of the bush within the gardens.



The photo is of the beautiful gardens at Waroona

FEATURED MEMBER

COMMITMENT, CARE AND COMMUNITY: JACKIE SCURLOCK (BARNWELL) O.A.M

For Jackie, service is about commitment, care, and contribution to community – and that contribution is ongoing. *“It is a duty to serve when you have come from a position of privilege,”* Jackie says, with privilege being defined in many different ways.



This philosophy of care and contribution started, as it often does, at home with her father and grandfather being in the health care profession. Jackie's mother received her O.A.M in 1996 for service to the community, particularly through the Anglican Church and the W.A branch of the National Council of Women. Jackie's upbringing also cemented in her the philosophy of 'giving it a go'.

An excellent scholar, she graduated from Perth College with academic distinction and entry into her dream profession: medicine. Through internships and experience including at Royal Perth Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital (P.M.H), The Brompton, London, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, and consultancy work, Jackie became respected and well known in the world of paediatric medicine.

In the 1980s, with her focus on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), she set up monitoring clinics at P.M.H to assist and counsel parents with home monitoring of SIDS children. Along with her pioneer research on SIDS, Jackie was instrumental in broadening the understanding and prevention of SIDS, as well as working with families who had experienced the trauma of SIDS. In her citation for her 2004 O.A.M, her service to paediatric medicine, particularly in the area of SIDS was referenced.

Also referenced in her citation was her service and contribution at the Ngala Family Resource Centre, where she was involved as either a Board member or as a member of the Friends of Ngala from 1996 to 2024. Jackie and her mentor, Dr Pat Ryan, recognised the need for medical input on the Board and this focus served Ngala well.

Jackie's deep commitment to her religion and the wider ecumenical church community has resulted in her taking on/serving on many boards and committees. She is currently President of Australian Church Women and lay pastoral minister at her local church.

Jackie's list of committees and areas of community contribution is extensive, including service for six years on the W.A Branch of the Order of Australia Association. However, when asked what gave her the most joy or happiest moments in her career, her response was very people-based: "*helping parents bond with their babies*", "*working out the diagnosis that helps children and families*". Others have said that Jackie is 'a brilliant and caring diagnostician' but for Jackie, it is not the brilliance that is important, it is being able to help and make a difference to a life whether that be in hospitals, private practice, refugee detention centres or even on committees.

VIC

CHAIR'S REPORT

FRED HARRINGTON O.A.M

It was pleasing to see so many members and guests at the recent Vic Branch Mid-Year lunch and, in particular, to have 20 members who have joined the Association in 2026 with us.

Those in attendance were able to hear a most interesting address by Kirsty Sword Gusmão A.O on her life journey from regional Victoria to becoming the First Lady of Timor-Leste. Before Kirsty's presentation, O.A.A Foundation Scholarship recipient Alex Nair provided an overview of her career

journey and achievements since receiving her scholarship. I thank all Vic Branch members for their support of this event; the committee was overwhelmed by the response, which led to negotiations with the venue to squeeze in an extra 23 spaces. Despite this additional capacity, we still had room to mingle both before and after the lunch.

Investitures for King's Birthday Honours recipients are being held over three days in late August. I extend the best wishes of the Vic Branch to all King's Birthday recipients for their Investiture and trust they very much accept and feel proud that they are being acknowledged for their contribution to their community.

Vic Branch and all Regional Groups have a wide and varied range of events for members. I encourage all members to regularly check details of events and booking arrangements on the Vic Branch page of the O.A.A National website at: [Upcoming Events – The Order of Australia Association](#).

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the passing of two former Vic Branch members in recent months. Richard Rozen O.A.M was a long-term member of the Vic Branch Committee. He was also the National Merchandise Officer for many years and a familiar face at many national conferences, promoting and selling O.A.A Merchandise. Kevin Howard O.A.M served on the Vic Branch Committee as our Regional Groups Coordinator. His term was in the formative years of the establishment of Regional Groups within Vic Branch. Our condolences are extended to the family and friends of both Richard and Kevin.

EVENTS

MID-YEAR LUNCH

More than 120 O.A.A members and their guests, together with Order of Australia recipients, attended the Victoria Branch Mid-Year lunch at the Stamford Plaza Melbourne in July.

There was a brief welcome from O.A.A National Chair William Lye O.A.M K.C, then 2022 O.A.A Foundation Scholarship recipient Alex Nair provided an update since she completed a Bachelor of Applied Science (Medical Radiography) at R.M.I.T University. Alex's scholarship was funded through contributions from Victoria Branch reserves, several Regional Groups and individual members, and allowed her to focus on her radiography studies and to liaise and work with Dr David Ball A.O, her mentor, regarding her fourth-year project which helped her to complete her studies to a high standard.

Fast forward to the present, Alex recently completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment through R.M.I.T University and a Graduate Certificate in X-Ray Image Interpretation through Monash University, which has enabled better practice in trauma imaging while Alex is mainly rostered in the Emergency Department.

From Resistance to a Life of Service was the title of the presentation from guest speaker Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmão A.O. From a quiet childhood in regional Victoria to clandestine work assisting East Timorese men to safety, from falling in love with an imprisoned resistance leader to becoming First Lady of Timor-Leste, Kirsty's life has been marked by extraordinary experiences and achievements.

When Kirsty was presented with her Order of Australia in 2015 by her friend and then Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove A.K C.V.O M.C, she found herself reflecting on an extraordinary privilege

-- the privilege of having played a small part in the birth of a nation. She came to that role first as a young pro-independence activist working largely in the shadows and later, quite unexpectedly, as First Lady of the newly independent Timor-Leste and as an advocate for women and children in that country. Kirsty said, "It has been, without question, the great adventure of my life, and it has never once felt like a burden. It has felt like a privilege".

Kirsty shared a snapshot of that journey, organised around five themes:

First, the history of the relationship between Timor-Leste and Australia, and a debt of blood still only partly repaid. Second, her own personal journey alongside Timor-Leste, which began in the most unlikely of places: a classroom in Bendigo, learning Indonesian. Third, some of the truly remarkable progress Timor-Leste has made over the past 25 years of nationhood, a gargantuan task that many attendees at the lunch have contributed to in ways large and small. Fourth, the challenges and opportunities ahead, both for Timor-Leste and for the Australian communities who continue to engage with and support it. And finally, practical thoughts on how attendees at the lunch and the broader Australian community can contribute to Timor-Leste's future.

What happened in Timor between 1942 and 1943 is one of the most extraordinary chapters of our shared wartime history, and one of the reasons Kirsty believes Australia owes Timor-Leste a debt that is not merely diplomatic but moral.

In December 1941, just days after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, a small Australian force known as Sparrow Force, roughly 1,400 men strong, was sent north to Timor to try to forestall a Japanese advance toward Australia. When the Japanese invaded in February 1942, most of that force was overwhelmed and forced to surrender within days. But several hundred commandos from the 2nd Independent Company retreated into the mountains and, remarkably, continued to wage a guerrilla campaign against the Japanese for the best part of a year.

They survived and fought because the Timorese people sheltered them, fed them and guided them through terrain that no outsider could have navigated. The Timorese carried equipment on ponies and passed on intelligence regarding Japanese movements, all at extraordinary personal risk. Many Timorese who assisted the Australians were later executed by the Japanese. Historians estimate that around 150 Australians lost their lives in the Timor campaign. The Timorese people paid a vastly higher price: it is estimated that some 40-60,000 Timorese died as a direct consequence of that campaign and the Japanese occupation that followed.

That is the origin of a phrase you will sometimes hear older Australian veterans use about Timor: an obligation of blood or 'the debt of honour.' The men who served with Sparrow Force never forgot what the Timorese did for them and many spent the rest of their lives trying to repay it. Kirsty believes that every Australian schoolchild should learn this history alongside Gallipoli and Kokoda, because it says as much about who we are and who we owe, as those two campaigns.

Kirsty said, "I have always believed that this wartime history is the true foundation stone of the Australia-Timor-Leste relationship. Everything that has followed, including my own involvement, sits on top of it. It is why, when Australians ask me why on earth this small half-island nation of barely one and a half million people should matter so much to a country of our size and wealth, I always come back to those mountains in 1942 and to the ordinary Timorese families who chose, at enormous risk to themselves, to help strangers who had washed up on their shore. We are, in a very real sense, still living out the consequences of that choice".

What can you, practically, do? First, see it for yourselves. Each year Kirsty runs a Study Tour to Timor-Leste, as she believes there is no substitute for meeting the people whose lives have been touched

and seeing directly where the challenges and the progress lie.

Second, consider supporting organisations doing this work on the ground, including the Alola Foundation, which continues its work in maternal and child health, women's economic empowerment and education, more than two decades after Kirsty founded it.

Third, and this is perhaps the most ambitious ask of all, use whatever platform, expertise or influence you have in helping rebuild Australia's regional literacy. Advocate for Indonesian and other regional languages in local schools. Mentor a young person interested in a career in the region. Talk about Timor-Leste and about this relationship to people who have never heard the important stories that need to be told.

After Kirsty was thanked and presented with her gift, Victoria Branch Chair Fred Harrington O.A.M recognised and thanked 20 Order of Australia recipients who joined the Association in 2026 and presented each with a gift.



Photo of Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmão A.O and O.A.A National Chair William Lye O.A.M K.C

FEATURED MEMBER

FOR SERVICES TO THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY: SILVIA RENDA O.A.M

Silvia Renda O.A.M received her Award as part of the 2026 King's Birthday Honours *for services to the Portuguese community*.

If you ask Silvia when she began her voluntary work in supporting the Portuguese diaspora in Australia, her response will be, "before I even set foot on Australian soil".

Silvia's parents made the huge decision to leave Portugal with Silvia and her young brother and migrate to Australia. She remembers that, as a young teenager, she was overwhelmed by the "uprooting of everything [she] had known: family members, school friends, football team members, language, cultural ways... everything".

On the flight to Australia, Silvia remembers walking the aisles with the Qantas flight attendants helping passengers with their selection of meals as best she could with very limited English. Silvia's mastery of English excelled and in two years of secondary school study she topped the class. This meant that she was increasingly called upon by members of the community to help with all sorts of bureaucratic matters.

And she hasn't stopped since. Silvia joined Sol de Portugal, the Portuguese folk dancing group as Vice Secretary supporting her father, who was Secretary, and the committee in governance and administration. The committee appreciated Silvia's diligence and skills. She learnt about advocacy, governance, association regulations, policies and grant writing when many teenagers her age were busy with sports and other activities.

She went on to be the Founder of the Portuguese Speaking Communities of Victoria, also known as *Comunidades de Língua Portuguesa Inc.*, a not-for-profit organisation established to bring together Victoria's Portuguese-speaking communities.



The organisation's annual flagship event was the Portuguese Festival, which is still going strong today. It continues to bring together communities from Portugal, Brazil and Timor-Leste, among others, to celebrate a shared language and a spirit of harmony. Silvia recognises that the festival, "was made possible through the collective efforts of many dedicated volunteers and community organisations working together".

Silvia's approach to helping people seems to characterise many facets of her life. She is the Founder and Chair of the Portuguese Australian Women's Association and through this organisation has consolidated and strengthened the voice of Portuguese diaspora women living in Australia.

As a result of her tireless and impactful work in the community, she has been appointed Councillor of the Portuguese Diaspora Council. The Council is an influential global body representing 44 countries on issues around economy, sciences, culture and citizenship. It has 350 members and its aim is to promote dialogue and cooperation. From little things, big things have certainly grown, and Silvia continues to be a voice for the Portuguese community in Australia, locally and internationally.

Receiving the Order of Australia is something Silvia describes as an incredibly moving and humbling experience. She had never expected the recognition, but feels it is an important signal from Australian society about how much community contribution is valued.

She also says that, “Recognition like this rarely belongs to one person”. The Honour recognises her parents, she says, “whose sacrifices and courage sit at the heart of this, and for my family, especially my husband, who has supported the many hours and commitment that community service requires”. She notes that it also honours the many Portuguese who have been part of all the initiatives and work over many years to ensure that the Portuguese community has a voice, and who share the richness of their culture with the broader Australian community.

OPINION PIECE

THE A-BOMBS WERE NECESSARY AND THE MOST MERCIFUL OPTION

August 2026 marked another anniversary of the atomic bomb attacks on Japan in 1945, and many commentators still argue they should never have been used. To the contrary, if they hadn’t been used, the war would have gone on at the cost of 30 million lives – most of them Japanese. Arguments for not using the weapons are wrong and in fact we should be grateful they were deployed.

What was the Japanese plan? It was to bring the Allies into a D-Day Mark II – a new version of the 1944 Normandy landings in France. A massive 75% of Japan is not level ground, and this would have worked well for the defenders. The huge Allied superiority in tanks, artillery and air attack would have been made much less effective. Japan’s eight million armed forces members would have been supplemented by an enormous militia – if that is what you call 13 year-old girls with satchel charges hurling themselves under tanks. Ten thousand kamikaze aircraft would have attacked the Allied landing force. To this would be added suicide speedboats, divers and submarines. The Allies would have suffered grievously in the assault, which would have begun in the Kyushu Peninsula. Likely fatalities would have been around 1.25 million over much of 1946.

The Japanese, however, would have borne the brunt of the deaths. Self-sacrifice was a frequent military strategy. Whereas historically normal military forces break and run at a 30% casualty rate, the Japanese died instead. At Tarawa, for example, their Army lost all but eight of 2,571 men, a loss rate of 99.7%. Similar figures were seen in other battles.

The civilian militia would not have resisted so strongly, given their limited training and lack of battle experience. But out of millions deployed, it is not unreasonable to expect many dying. Other civilians would have died too from having their cities bombed – Japan’s industrialisation was part of everyday streets across the country.

Some critics of the A-Bomb deployment argue for other means of getting Japan to surrender. It is worth examining those arguments to see their mistaken reasoning.

Starvation. Japan was already being blockaded by the US Navy, and a shortage of food was occurring nation-wide. But it was not going to be enough to get the country to surrender, and it was primarily hurting civilians, with food going first to the military fighting on behalf of the country. Ironically continuing the blockade would kill more civilians than military.

The Russians. Japan was not afraid of Russia – they had beaten them convincingly in the 1905 war – and the USSR had almost no amphibious assault capabilities with which to assist an invasion.

A demonstration bomb? Some argue setting off a demonstration of an atomic weapon would have convinced the Japanese to surrender. Apart from stopping such a demonstration by placing a large group of P.O.Ws at the site, the demonstration would have required one of two bombs the U.S had. And without a great loss of life, how would a massive explosion be convincing? Japan had endured massive bombing raids for months without giving up.

Delay? General Sweeney, pilot of the second atomic aircraft *Bocks Car*, calculated 900 Americans a day were being killed and wounded. Once the defence of the sacred Home Islands began, Japanese commanders were under orders to execute their prisoners. Approximately 300,000 Prisoners of War were in captivity, and all would have died. And, of course, the war would have continued every day across the Pacific where the Japanese were still being fought. Refusing combat, if such a thing could have been commanded, would only give the Imperial forces time to recover.

Negotiation. The Japanese were not seeking surrender. On 10 July the former Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew said, “We have received no peace offer from the Japanese government through official or unofficial channels”. Indeed, after the Hiroshima bomb the Imperial government broadcast on radio: “...as long as we formulate strong steel-like measures to cope with this new type of bomb, it will be possible to keep damage at a minimum”. They had a huge underground cave command system at Nagano, north of Tokyo, and a national resolve to keep going. One of the residents of Nagasaki later wrote, “A few days later, enemy planes scattered leaflets over the city. Although I do not remember clearly, these said something like ‘Japan is defeated, and the emperor has surrendered’. We scoffed at this information, calling it lies”.

Ironically, a D-Day style invasion would have killed far more on both sides. With the terrain favouring the defenders, it would have taken many months of resistance being blasted to bits. The norm in Europe had been if any village contained resistance – snipers, barricades with defenders, and so on – then the oncoming forces withdrew and rained down artillery and air-delivered explosives before their precious soft-skinned infantry went in. And to fight would have been a Japanese norm. Mitsuo Fuchida, air leader of the Pearl Harbour attack, said post-war: “Every man, woman and child would have resisted the invasion, with sticks and stones if necessary”.

Post-war there have been several commentators who, it seems, would much rather the Allies die in huge numbers than the war being halted by the Emperor’s decision not to go on. Some even argue there was a racist factor, postulating a nuclear weapon would not have been used on Germany. But notably Japan fared better under occupation than some of the victorious nations. Britain, for example, endured rationing until 1955 – it ended in Japan in 1953.

Towards the end of the American Civil War, General Sherman commented, “War is cruelty. There's no use trying to reform it. The crueller it is, the sooner it will be over”. It was that way for the 200,000 dead of the A-Bomb raids, but there could have been 30 million dead.

-o-o-O-o-o-

Dr Tom Lewis O.A.M is a military historian. This article draws from his book *Atomic Salvation*. His latest works are *Gallipoli – Dawn of the Anzac Spirit*, written for children and published by Big Sky, and *The Battle of the Coral Sea – Explained*; “how America saved Australia”, from Avonmore Books.



The photo is of a Marine returning to a Coast Guard assault transport after two days and nights on the beach of Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. The author argues that a conventional invasion would have seen more than a million of such Allied troops die.

N.T

CHAIR'S REPORT

Rex Wild A.O K.C

Deputy Chair Allan McGill A.M and I attended Government House in May for the Investiture of Australia Day awardees, and we will be present at the August Investitures to recognise the King's Birthday awardees.

The Branch Committee has been working busily, especially in the lead-up to the Annual Dinner held on Tuesday 28 July. In an expansion of her committee duties, Jaya Srinivas O.A.M has taken responsibility for our media presence; Linda Fazldeen A.M is looking after our membership, which stands at 137; and Nora Lewis A.M is still editing the newsletter. Aminul Islam O.A.M, our Treasurer, and I have updated our financial affairs in the context of the current committee. The National Treasurer assures me that Amin is the best of all the Branch money men!

We have enjoyed the weekly newsletter to Branches from the National Chair William Lye O.A.M K.C to keep people informed of O.A.A issues and events nationally. In recent messages William has sent warm wishes to the N.T for Territory Day, reported that our national membership in July stood at 8,089, detailed how to encourage new recipients to join the Association, declared that passports can be endorsed with the record of an award in the Order, and outlined the calendar of future National Conferences. Darwin will host the National Conference in 2029, and planning will commence very soon!

I attended a bi-annual lunch at the Alice Springs Civic Centre as a guest of the Mayor, Asta Hill, in June 2026. This was attended by 30 or so recipients of Order of Australia awards. It is a recognition of their contribution and standing in the regional community.

EVENTS

NT BRANCH ANNUAL DINNER

Our Annual Dinner was held on Tuesday 28 July in the function room at Silks Racing Club Restaurant and was attended by more than 75 members of the N.T Branch and guests. We are most grateful to Allan McGill A.M for taking charge of arrangements for the dinner, assisted by Committee members Bob Elix A.M and Helen Summers A.M who liaised with the Silks management team. Everyone had an enjoyable time of fellowship. On entry – and later – guests were entertained by Kirsty McCallum on violin accompanied by Nora Lewis A.M on keys with some familiar tunes.

We were honoured to welcome Andrew Phelan A.M, Chair of the A.C.T Branch to the dinner, and our own Minister for Workforce Development, the Honourable Robyn Cahill O.A.M.

Special guest speaker was Charlie King A.M, a pioneer in sports broadcasting, champion of Indigenous issues and founder of the No More Campaign. He has dedicated his life to showing what is possible for First Nations people, accompanying his interesting story with illustrations.



This photo shows N.T Branch Committee members with Cabinet Minister the Hon Robyn Cahill O.A.M

TAS

CHAIR'S REPORT

Alastair Douglas O.A.M

On 17 June 2026, Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells was sworn in as Tasmania's 30th Governor. The Tasmania Branch has been honoured with Her Excellency's acceptance to become the Patron of our Branch for the term of her office. On 4 September she will conduct Investitures for 23 Tasmanians who have been recognised in the Order of Australia.

The Branch Investiture Day Lunch is shaping up to be another success with more than 80 attendees booked well before the closing date, including a substantial number of awardees, their family and friends. It is also pleasing to have several awardees who will be welcomed as members.

We are looking forward to attending the Adelaide conference next year, with the possibility to travel on one of the new Bass Strait ships. Planning for the 2028 conference in Hobart is underway with a small group already busy developing a memorable event.

EVENTS

AROUND THE REGIONS

Southern Region: A group of Southern members enjoyed an informative visit to the Tasmania Police Museum managed by the Tasmania Police Historical Group, which is the custodian of the material, culture and stories of Tasmania's policing history from colonial days to the present. Following the visit members enjoyed an informal lunch at a nearby waterfront café.

Northern Region: The Northern Region, in looking for ways the Association could meet its objectives to celebrate and promote outstanding Australian Citizenship, has decided to conduct luncheons in towns near Launceston to meet the members in that region, learn about their careers and discover why their community nominated them to receive an award in the Order of Australia. The first luncheon was at Deloraine, where 14 members and friends attended. The annual Winter Solstice luncheon was held at the Riverside Golf Club. The guest speaker was Andrew Lovitt, who is currently President of Tamar Lake Inc. and Chair of the Tamar Action Group. His talk on the Tamar River generated some interesting questions.

North-West Region: The North-West Region recently held another of their regular informal luncheons, this time at the Anvers Chocolate Factory. Their Secretary, Vicki Purnell O.A.M, was guest speaker and she spoke about her Bridie's Blossoms and Blessings project, where she supports families of stillborn and miscarried babies, people with dementia and women with cancer across the state.

FEATURED MEMBER

Bryan Walpole A.M: A fortunate life

Bryan Walpole A.M recounts his interesting life:

“I spent an idyllic childhood on a small farm in Spreyton (population 250), Tasmania, where we grew apples and pears. I sailed my dinghy on the Mersey until all was rudely interrupted when I was 11, in 1955, and left home to board at Launceston Grammar, a hellhole in those days: caned, cold and cussed. I emerged as *dux* in 1961, and so qualified to study medicine at Monash, along with only three other Tasmanians. It was Melbourne’s second and new university, with an exciting, innovative curriculum, and the first co-ed college -- Deakin Hall, more good fun! I was spat out of Monash at 23, took an internship at Royal Perth Hospital, then a year as District Medical officer at Wyndham in the far northwest, together with another vastly more experienced doctor, for whom I did the anaesthetics. This was two years after the referendum on Aboriginal people being given citizenship, so many had come to Wyndham because they were removed from tribal lands. I encountered awful racism, shocking child health and appalling domestic violence, and it seems little has changed since then. I was too young and naïve to really understand the complex social issues.



The surgery I helped with there piqued my interest, so I went to Britain for four years of surgical training. I travelled there as ship’s doctor on the *Port Caroline*, a 15,000 ton refrigerated ship, taking Australian and New Zealand lamb to Britain. The voyage took more than three months, but I had free roam of the bridge, and the officers taught me navigation. There was a twice daily sextant observation, midday for latitude and a star sight at dusk for position. I helped with fixes on reefs, lighthouses and islands across the Pacific, then through the Panama Canal, with a stop for fuel in the Caribbean, finally arriving at London’s Canary Wharf on a freezing cold February day.

Three years, 25 ocean races, and a surgical degree later, I drove my Ford Anglia from London to Kathmandu and flew to Melbourne, looking for a surgical post but arriving in February, so all the 1974 hospital jobs were taken. I took a post as casualty supervisor at Western General Hospital in Footscray, the 'wild west' of Melbourne. By 1984, I had a wife and two children, all sick of inner city living, so we came to Hobart, where a job was offered running the rather dilapidated emergency department at Royal Hobart Hospital (R.H.H.).

Here the children loved walking to school, my wife was at U.TAS, and I had a supportive administration to make some big changes, bringing us up to national standard. I was involved in formation of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, the specialist qualification that now has more than 4,000 Fellows and is the standard for practising emergency medicine accepted worldwide.

Working shifts, I had plenty of leave, so spent many happy hours supporting expeditions: four times to Antarctica, once to Everest with nine summiteers (I stayed at base camp) twice to the north pole on a Russian nuclear-powered icebreaker (the *Yamal*), several cruises around Japan and a memorable volunteer support for the American Birding Association voyage from Japan via Eastern Russia, then across the Aleutians to Alaska. Pitcairn, Henderson, Easter Island were fascinating stops along the way round the Pacific.

At 60, I left the shelter of R.H.H and embarked on a year on Macquarie Island as medical officer, home brewer, deputy chef and bread baker. It was a wonderful time, except for the compulsory removal of my appendix!

Arriving home, in 2002 I backed up the Defence Forces on the Solomons twice, worked in East Timor, helped staff the refugee camps on both Manus Island, Nauru, (just awful) and some local detainee camps (even worse). I volunteered at the Pontville detainee camp, where male refugees were sent before freedom. They were wonderful fellows. I shall never forget their kindness and fun playing chess with Iraqis, Iranians, and kicking a soccer ball with Indonesians. I filled in for absent doctors in embassies at Port Moresby, Vientiane, Jakarta and Honiara, learning heaps about Pacific politics and tropical health.

My love of sailing led me on arrival in Hobart to yacht clubs here, where I sailed on Dragons, Etchells and an offshore racer, then as skipper of my beloved offshore racer *Invincible*, where we encourage women as crew. For 12 years I have supported 'Sailability', taking out disabled folks on our two 24-foot plywood racing yachts. This is a pleasurable experience, and it is a privilege to see them having such fun safely on board.

I finished medical practice in 2024, spending the last year helping those wanting to access Voluntary Assisted Dying, and unable to find a willing G.P.

In all, it's been a fortunate life. It's a great help to have had loving parents and wife, a peaceful household, children, siblings and an education that allows one the freedom to choose. I have been unable to fathom why I received an A.M!

A.C.T

CHAIR'S REPORT

Andrew Phelan A.M

It has been a busy few months for the A.C.T Branch: a memorable King's Birthday Luncheon, a warm visit from our National Chair, a rich NAIDOC Week conversation, and a King's Birthday Honours list that recognised many members of our local community.

The Branch held its 2026 King's Birthday Luncheon on 9 June at the Royal Canberra Golf Club, where 65 members and guests celebrated the outstanding Australians named in the King's Birthday Honours List, including our local recipients. Guest speaker Admiral Chris Barrie A.C R.A.N (RTD), former Chief of the Defence Force, spoke with authority and candour on issues facing Australia today, from climate and national security to AUKUS. My sincere thanks to Lynne Duckham O.A.M, Bruce Trewartha O.A.M, Joe Johnson C.S.C O.A.M A.A.M, Phil Morall A.M C.S.C, and all Committee members whose efforts made the day such a success.

Monica and I were delighted to host National Chair William Lye O.A.M K.C and Branch Committee members at our home on 20 June. William was in Canberra for a Refugee Week event at Government House, where our new Association President, the Hon. Hieu Van Le A.C, delivered the keynote address. We later attended the Northern Territory Branch Dinner in Darwin on 28 July, where Gurindji man and respected media and sports identity Charlie King A.M spoke.

It was my great pleasure to congratulate all those A.C.T and adjacent regional N.S.W residents who received Honours and Awards in the 2026 King's Birthday list. Each award recognises outstanding service to our community and nation, and I have written personally to every recipient with the Branch's congratulations and an invitation to our New Recipients Reception on Wednesday 23 September 2026. Members — including those from other Branches who may be visiting Canberra — are warmly encouraged to join us.

Nominations are open for the Branch's 2026 Student Citizenship Awards. Julie Long O.A.M, Joe Johnson C.S.C O.A.M A.A.M and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt A.O will assess entries, with the awards evening planned for the fourth quarter of 2026.

EVENTS

NAIDOC WEEK MORNING TEA

To celebrate the 2026 National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observation Committee (NAIDOC) week, the Branch hosted a morning tea and discussion on Wednesday 8 July at the Royal Canberra Golf Club with Ms. Poppy Chalmers and Ms. Kyah Adams, two well recognised First Nations' youth leaders from the ACT region.

Poppy Chalmers is a proud Yuin woman from the South Coast who works as a Corporate Administration Officer at Allied Health Australia. She is also a young board member and is actively

involved across a range of spaces focused on community, leadership, advocacy and creating stronger opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Kyah Adams is a proud Birri-Gubba and Torres Strait Islander woman currently in her third year of a Bachelor of Arts degree at the Australian National University, majoring in linguistics -- specifically Indigenous languages and the lexicographical aspect of language revitalisation.

Kyah is currently employed with the Department of Employment and workplace relations as a policy officer in the workers' compensation team through an initiative called the Murra Programme.

Branch committee member David Templeman A.M facilitated the discussion, and Poppy and Kyan shared their personal experiences in navigating issues for First Nations people and discussed some of the many challenges, particularly in sustaining and maintaining social cohesion and community resilience and issues in relation to Closing the Gap and the outcome of The Voice referendum.

The Branch members engaged in a Q & A with Poppy and Kyah, appreciating the maturity and insight of the young leaders.



The photo shows Kyah Adams, David Templeman A.M and Poppy Chalmers

KING'S BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

More than 60 members attended our annual King's Birthday Lunch at the Royal Canberra Golf Club on 9 June and celebrated the achievements of King's Birthday awardees from the A.C.T and region. The guest speaker at the lunch was former Chief of Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie A.M, speaking on the topic *Current community issues that are impacting Australia and its wellbeing*. Admiral Barrie spoke with authority, drawing on his distinguished career and his continuing engagement, through the Australian National University, his advocacy on climate change and national security, his leadership of P.T.S.D Australia New Zealand, and his current contribution to public debate on AUKUS, offering our members a perspective that was informed, frank and inspiring. Admiral Barrie was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2001 *for eminent service to the Australian Defence Force as Chief of the Defence Force*.

FEATURED MEMBER

A life of service: Dr Douglas Sturkey C.V.O .AM K.St.J

New Zealand-born Dr Douglas Sturkey C.V.O A.M K.St.J is a former Australian diplomat and Official Secretary to the Governor-General of Australia. He grew up in Western Australia and was a member of the diplomatic staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade from 1957 to 1990, during which time he served at seven Australian missions abroad, and at departmental headquarters in Canberra. He held many senior appointments including Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and other states in the Arabian Peninsula. In Canberra he was Principal Adviser responsible for policy advice to the government on matters relating to Australia's relations with Southeast Asia.

In 1990 Dr Sturkey was appointed to succeed Sir David Smith as Official Secretary to the Governor-General of Australia, a position he held until July 1998.



In the U.K New Year Honours List of January 1995, Dr Sturkey was appointed a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (C.V.O) for his services as the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. In the Queen's Birthday Honours List of June 1999, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for *his services as the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, to the Australian Diplomatic Service and to the Canberra community.*

Dr Sturkey is also a Knight of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, and he was a Priory Officer of the Order in Australia, being the Order's Director of Ceremonies.

Following his retirement, Douglas completed a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy within the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University. Dr Sturkey's doctoral dissertation was on the Clinton Administration's attempt to effect a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, and the thesis was subsequently acknowledged by his peers as diplomatic history at its best. Dr Sturkey was previously a visiting fellow at the A.N.U where his research interests included Middle East politics, the Arab-Israeli dispute, and Gulf security.

N.S.W

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dr John Gullotta A.M

It has been a busy time with several important initiatives, events and activities taking place across the Branch and throughout our regions.

We have been working closely with our regions on the bank account rationalisation process, which is now nearing completion. This has been an important piece of work in strengthening our governance and ensuring greater consistency and accountability across the Association. I would like to sincerely thank all our Regional Convenors and their committees for their cooperation, assistance and patience in facilitating this important process. My special thanks go to our Treasurer Louise Paisley O.A.M, Regional Director (and O.A.A Deputy Chair) David North O.A.M, and Branch Nominated Director Gary Smith A.M, for their tireless work, commitment and dedication in helping bring this important governance matter towards completion.

The Branch also held its annual Archibald Prize Private Viewing at the Art Gallery of N.S.W which, as always, proved to be an extremely popular and successful event. The viewing was a sell-out with excellent attendance. It was a wonderful opportunity to enjoy some of Australia's most significant works of art in the unique atmosphere of a private viewing.

We also enjoyed a wonderful evening attending *Anastasia the Musical*, starring the legendary Nancy Hayes A.M, together with Rhonda Burchmore O.A.M. It was a fantastic performance and a memorable evening for all who attended. Our members and guests were also treated to a special meet-and-greet following the show, which provided a wonderful opportunity to meet the stars and hear a few stories of their career highlights.

Looking ahead, the 2026 King's Birthday Investitures will be held in September. The N.S.W Branch will proudly attend the Investiture ceremonies at Government House, Sydney, representing and promoting our Association and recognising the outstanding achievements and contributions of the new recipients.

In October, we will hold our Welcome Luncheon at N.S.W Parliament House for both Australia Day 2026 and King's Birthday 2026 recipients.

Following the great success of last year's event, we are also planning another Christmas Long Lunch. The wonderful response to last year's celebration demonstrated how much our members enjoy the opportunity to come together socially.

The Branch continues to place great importance on maintaining a strong connection with our regional members. We are attending as many regional events as possible and remain committed to ensuring that our members across regional and remote N.S.W are well represented and supported. Our regions are truly the lifeblood of our Association and their contribution, enthusiasm and dedication are greatly valued.

EVENTS

Archibald Prize Private Viewing at the Art Gallery of N.S.W

On Saturday, 6 June, 72 O.A.A members, family and friends gathered at the Art Gallery of N.S.W for our annual private viewing of the highly anticipated Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prize exhibitions. The morning was a wonderful combination of art, culture, friendship and shared enjoyment.

Arriving at the Art Gallery at 9:30am, before the doors opened to the general public, provided us with the rare opportunity to explore the exhibitions in a peaceful and relaxed atmosphere, away from the usual crowds. It was a wonderful way to begin the morning and allowed everyone to take their time appreciating the works on display.

Divided into two groups and equipped with headsets, we were expertly guided through the exhibitions by experienced gallery guides, Annabelle and Jenny. Their enthusiasm and engaging commentary brought this year's finalists to life, providing fascinating insights into the artists, their subjects and the stories and ideas behind many of the works.

The guides also offered interesting background information about the history of the three prestigious prizes, helping us to better appreciate the diversity of styles, subjects and artistic approaches represented in this year's exhibitions. There was plenty to admire and discuss, from striking portraits and thought-provoking contemporary works to the landscapes and other outstanding pieces featured in the Wynne and Sulman Prizes.

Following the tour, many members and guests continued the morning at the Art Gallery café, enjoying brunch together and sharing lively conversations about their favourite works, the artists and, of course, the eventual prize winners. It was a lovely opportunity to relax and catch up with friends while continuing the discussions sparked by the exhibition.



**The photo shows (L-R)
Deputy Chair Martha
Jabour O.A.M, Trish
Whetton O.A.M, Treasurer
Louise Paisley O.A.M and
Chair Dr John Gullotta
A.M admiring 'Once upon
a time in Yarralumla' a
portrait of the Governor-
General**

Behind the Curtain: An unforgettable afternoon at Anastasia

On Saturday 4 July, 35 members, family and friends enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at Sydney's Lyric Theatre for a matinee performance of *Anastasia the Musical*.

The spectacular production delighted the audience with its stunning costumes, elaborate sets and captivating performances. From the opening scenes through to the finale, the production provided an entertaining and memorable afternoon of musical theatre, enjoyed by all who attended.

However, what followed the performance elevated the occasion from memorable to truly extraordinary: Two of the stars of Anastasia and highly respected O.A.A members, theatre royalty Nancye Hayes A.M and Rhonda Burchmore O.A.M, generously took the time to meet with our group following the performance. In a relaxed and informal session, Nancye and Rhonda shared stories and fascinating insights from their distinguished careers in Australian musical theatre and entertainment.

Members and guests had the opportunity to ask questions, hear personal anecdotes, take photographs and have programmes signed. Their warmth, generosity and genuine camaraderie were evident throughout the gathering, creating a wonderful atmosphere and making everyone feel particularly welcome.

It was a special privilege to spend time with two of Australia's most celebrated and accomplished theatre performers. Their careers have spanned many decades and their contribution to Australian entertainment is remarkable. Despite their busy schedules and another performance that evening, they took the time to engage with our members so generously, and their efforts were very much appreciated by everyone present.

As a token of the Association's appreciation, N.S.W Treasurer Louise Paisley O.A.M presented both Nancye and Rhonda with magnificent bouquets of flowers on behalf of the Association. The gesture was warmly received and provided a fitting way to thank them for their generosity and for helping to make the occasion so special.

The N.S.W Branch sincerely thanks both Nancye and Rhonda for giving their valuable time so willingly and for sharing their stories, experiences and friendship with our members and guests. Their generosity created memories that will undoubtedly be cherished for many years to come.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

Report from Foundation Chair, Dr Helen Nugent A.C

Feedback from the Order of Australia Association Conference annual dinner held in Brisbane on 18 April 2026, on presentations by last year's Scholarship awardees has been outstanding. This aligns with positive reports received from each awardee on their subsequent activities, with their describing the impact of the Scholarship as being life-changing: maintaining their high academic performance; enhancing their community activities; engaging constructively with their mentors; and benefiting from reduced financial stress.



Meantime, the Foundation Board continues its activities in three key areas:

1. Refining the Scholarships' selection criteria

The selection criteria for the award of the Scholarships have been in place for a long time and have served us well. The same criteria are used regardless of the university from which the awardee comes, contributing to the universally high quality of awardees.

However, during last year's selection process, the need to clarify eligibility in some instances led the Foundation Board to decide to refine the Scholarship criteria so the same issues did not arise again.

It should be stressed these changes are at the margin. The emphasis remains on identifying students who excel academically, who have given back significantly to the community, who have a clear vision of their career path, and who will benefit from the financial support provided by the scholarship, as well as from the accompanying mentorship from a member of the Order of Australia.

The revised criteria are:

Fundamental Criteria:

- Be currently enrolled in their first university degree(s): this means they should not have completed a university degree in the past.
- Studying full-time: This means they should have been enrolled in a full workload for the entirety of their degree.
- In their second year of study: This means they should be in their second year of enrolment in their chosen degree.
- Be an Australian citizen: This means they should have Australian citizenship by birth or naturalization.
- Be over 18 or in their 20s. In exceptional circumstances, some may be considered up to their early 30s.

Differential Criteria:

- Have demonstrated high academic achievement in their studies, particularly at university.
- Have demonstrated qualities of leadership, initiative and involvement in community affairs, both at university and during their high school years.
- Be able to articulate how they intend to use their degree and/or community involvement to benefit Australia in future.
- Be able to demonstrate their need for financial assistance to benefit from the completion of their course of study.
- Be able to articulate how they would benefit from a mentor who has received an award within the Order of Australia.

We also ask that, as a potential awardee, they indicate their preparedness to engage with fellow Alumni, the Order of Australia Association Foundation and the Order of Australia Association.

2. Awarding scholarships in 2026.

The Foundation Board has determined to award six scholarships in 2026.

This will bring to 72 the number of Scholarships that have been awarded by the Foundation since inception, at an aggregate value in the hands of recipients of around \$2.5 million. Last year, the value of each scholarship increased from \$40,000 to \$45,000, with an additional \$5,000 funded by the donor going towards travel and accommodation associated with attending the Round Table Conference with the Governor-General at the time the award is announced, and subsequently attending the Order of Australia Association Annual Dinner when the presentation is made to the awardee.

Given that the 2027 Order of Australia Association Conference will be held in Adelaide on 15 May 2027, the Foundation Board has decided that two of the six scholarships will go to Adelaide University. Awarding scholarships to a city hosting the Association Annual Conference lowers the travel costs associated with the scholarship.

Reflecting the wishes of the donors, two other scholarships will go to Monash University, with Griffith University in Brisbane and Charles Darwin University receiving the remaining two scholarships.

One of the two scholarships to Adelaide University will come from the corpus of the Order of Australia Association Foundation (reflecting a large anonymous donation made some years ago). It will be made in Engineering and Technology.

The second scholarship to be donated by the Order of Australia Association will be made in Minerals and Mining Engineering.

An award will be made to a student of Modern History at Monash University reflecting the generosity of Mr Grahame Leonard A.M and Mrs Ruth Leonard in providing the funds for this Scholarship.

Continuing his generous history of benefaction, Mr Paul Wheelton A.M K.S.J, the Secretary of the Foundation and a key member of our Board, will fund a second scholarship at Monash University to an awardee studying Engineering.

The other two scholarships also be donated by two of our most generous patrons.

Mr Nicholas Paspaley A.C, one of the Foundation's Board members, will extend his commitment to a student from Charles Darwin University by funding an awardee in the Faculty of Health who has a particular focus on Indigenous health. We thank Nick for his ongoing support.

And Mr Tim Fairfax A.C, who in 2024 donated a scholarship in Agriculture at the University of New England, will in this round support a student in the Creative Arts at Griffith University. This will continue Tim's ongoing magnanimous support for the creative arts for which he is well known and highly respected. We are absolutely thrilled that Tim is continuing his support of the Foundation, which is being reinforced by a further donation in the next round of scholarships.

The process of awarding the six new scholarships is well advanced, with greatly appreciated support from each University and the relevant faculty.

3. Increasing donor support

As we announced last year, the Foundation Board raised the target for its corpus from \$5 million to \$10 million, and we are thrilled to say that our corpus now sits at \$5.7 million.

In growing our corpus, our objective is simple: to help more young Australians fulfil their ambition for the benefit of Australia. Particularly over the past three years, as we interviewed so many talented students, we have been struck not just by the raw talent and degree of social commitment of our applicants, but also by the extent of financial stress being experienced by university students, regardless of their background.

The commitment of the Foundation Board is to be worthy guardians of our donors' trust, implicit in our ability to continue to deliver a scholarship scheme that has a reputation as the most highly regarded undergraduate scholarship programme offered in Australia. The Governor-General's support has reinforced the Scholarship's prestige.

In summary

We aim to make all recipients of an Order of Australia Honour proud of the work of the Foundation. In this way, the Foundation strives to bring even greater credit to Australia and what it means to have received an award within the Order of Australia.

-ENDS-